

REGION 8 HOT TOPICS

February 2016

Hot Issues – Superfund

Issue: Gold King Mine updates

Messages:

- Gladstone Water Treatment System has been on line treating water from the Gold King Mine discharge in the Animas River since mid-October 2015 and will continue to operate through the summer as we continue our work at the site.
- NPL Proposal: EPA has initiated preparation of a Hazard Ranking System package to support a potential NPL proposal in March, 2016 and is working with Silverton/San Juan County on several issues of importance to the local community including the scope of the NPL site and cooperative agreement funding.
- Cooperative Agreements: EPA has agreed to reimburse states, local governments and tribes for response related costs. Applications have been received from the following:
 - San Juan County (Silverton area) has requested \$8.4M for a wide variety of services, primarily to be performed by city and county employees.
 - La Plata County (Durango area) has requested \$2.3M.
 - The City of Durango, Colorado has submitted an application for \$6.1M
 - The Southern Ute Indian Tribe has submitted an application for \$5.5M.
- EPA hosted a stakeholder meeting in Denver for states, tribes, locals on February 5, 2016 to discuss future water quality monitoring on the Animas and San Juan rivers.

Contact: David Ostrander, Director of the Emergency Response and Preparedness Program, 303-312-6827, Bill Murray, Superfund Director, 303-312-6401.

Issue: Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC) Superfund Site, Montana: Potential NPL listing

Messages:

- EPA is evaluating whether the Superfund Alternative Approach is a viable alternative given the financial condition of CFAC and Glencore.
- EPA will not finalize the listing before the fall of 2016 to explore this option and engage in additional community outreach.

Background:

- With the support of the local community and the Montana Governor, EPA proposed adding the Columbia Falls Aluminum Site to the National Priorities List on March 26, 2015. EPA received 77 public comments in response and believes the site still qualifies for listing.
- On November 30, 2015, EPA entered into an administrative order on consent with the current owner of the site, Columbia Falls Aluminum Company (CFAC), whereby the company has agreed to perform the remedial investigation/feasibility study for the site subject to EPA oversight and has provided financial assurance in the form of a \$4M letter of credit.
- Some community members are now questioning the need to finalize the site on the NPL and are advocating that EPA address the site using the Superfund Alternative Approach. CFAC and its parent corporation, Glencore PLC, a multinational Anglo-Swiss commodities trading and mining company headquartered in Switzerland, are also requesting that EPA take this approach.

Contacts: RPM – Mike Cirian, 406-293-6194; Superfund Branch Chief – Joe Vranka, 406-457-5039; Legal – Mark Chalfant, 303-312-6177

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Issue: Silver Bow Creek/Butte Area Superfund Site, Montana

- There is significant public concern and newspaper coverage concerning the shape of the final remedial and restoration cleanup plan.
- The State, via Governor Bullock, has announced its intention to remove the Parrot Tailings under natural resource damage authority outside of the consent decree negotiation process using existing State natural resource damage restoration funds.

Messages:

- EPA is working cooperatively with the State to see that the removal of the Parrot Tailings happens and recently agreed to the release of \$16.5 million from a remediation fund into the State's restoration fund to accomplish this (a prior consent decree provided for this upon EPA agreement).
- EPA is also working cooperatively with the State on the remainder of the final cleanup plan, and recent events have accelerated the final plan discussion and consent decree process. EPA anticipates providing public input into the remedial part of the final cleanup plan this summer or fall before concluding remedial decision making and then finalizing the consent decree.
- EPA has a goal of December 2016 for lodging of the final consent decree.

Background:

- EPA issued a Record of Decision for the Butte Priority Soils Operable Unit (BPSOU) of the Silver Bow Creek/Butte Area site (a large section of the mining town of Butte, Montana) in 2006. The ROD was proceeded by 11 removal actions at this highly contaminated site.
- The ROD covers residential and non-residential soils cleanup, open mine pit reclamation, stormwater control, mine waste removal and capping, streambank bed and bank removals, and institutional controls.
- For groundwater, EPA's ROD left buried waste in place and focused on interception and treatment systems for the contaminated groundwater in Butte, to protect nearby Silver Bow Creek. This decision was based on extensive internal consultation with EPA groundwater experts from its Ada, Oklahoma lab and the national remedy review board.
- The State of Montana concurred in the 2006 BPSOU ROD except for the groundwater component. For the groundwater remedy component, the State wanted four buried wastes area, including the Parrot Tailings area, removed in addition to the collection and treatment system. The State later recovered approximately \$28 million in natural resource damage money from the Atlantic Richfield Company based on a restoration plan that provided for this buried waste removal.
- Since 2006, EPA has been implementing the BPSOU ROD under unilateral administrative orders issued to the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO). Most of the ROD components are now implemented, and significant human health, surface water and vegetation improvement has occurred. EPA is working with the State Department of Environmental Quality and the State Natural Resource Damage program to come up with a final cleanup plan for remaining remedy components and restoration work that could be placed under a Consent Decree, as provided under CERCLA.

Contacts: RPM – Nikia Green, 406-457-5019; Superfund Branch Chief – Joe Vranka, 406-457-5039; Legal – Henry Elsen, 406 -57-5030

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Hot Issues –Water

Issue: Utah Proposed Legislation Senate Bill 110

Messages:

- Utah Senate Bill 110 would allow permittees to initiate a peer review of the science underlying State actions on water quality standards, TMDLs, and technology-based effluent limits (TBELs) in permits.
- The proposed legislation appears to be inconsistent with certain federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requirements, and risks creating conflict between Utah's environmental programs and federal environmental law if enacted as written.
- EPA is reluctant to comment on actions of a state legislature. However, given the seriousness of the concerns, and in the spirit of partnership, EPA has commented on the draft legislation in a letter to Walt Baker, Director of Division of Water Quality at the Utah Department of Environmental Quality.

Background/Status:

- A group of POTWs, concerned with the UDEQ's work on nutrients, is proposing a rule which would allow permittees to initiate a peer review of the science underlying State actions on water quality standards, TMDLs, and technology-based effluent limits (TBELs) in permits. The finding of the peer review panel would be binding on the State's action. As written, the legislation appears inconsistent with certain federal CWA requirements.
- The bill would alter public participation in rule and permit development processes where the peer review process was invoked such that those public processes no longer meet the requirements of the CWA.
- The bill would create a conflict between state rules and the CWA on the standard for development and implementation of certain types of effluent limits in NPDES permits such that Utah's NPDES program would no longer meet the minimum requirements of the CWA.
- Regional management has discussed with Walt Baker and his staff our concerns, many of which they share. UDEQ is working with the legislation's proponents to try to address our mutual concerns but with limited success.

Contact: Colleen Rathbone, Wastewater Unit Chief, 303-312-6133.

Issue: Status of Appeal of NPDES permits for Discharge of Produced Water on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming

Messages:

- EPA and the appellants engaged in alternative dispute resolution and reached settlement on the appeals on December 11, 2015.
- EPA and the other parties are now implementing the settlement agreement.

Background:

- On March 12, 2015 EPA issued five permits for discharge of produced water from oil and gas facilities on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Those permits were appealed by two NGOs and two of the three permittees. The Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribes also intervened in the appeals.

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Issue: Lead in Drinking Water and Status in Region 8

Messages:

- Following the events in Flint, MI, all EPA Regions will be reaching out to States to discuss implementation of the Lead and Copper Rule (LCR).
- These discussions will include:
 - Current status for each system has recently exceeded the lead action level. There are 159 systems on this list for Region 8.
 - State LCR implementation practices (sampling protocol, sampling locations, corrosion treatment reviews, etc).
- We expect to share more details with State Drinking Water Programs in the next few weeks.
- Several states have already shared the results of their own lead reviews, and we appreciate getting that information.

Background/Status:

- There are 159 systems in Region 8 that have exceeded the lead action level since October 2012. To date, Region 8 has information on the status of the three systems that serve over 10,000 people.
- Denver Water is the largest system in Region 8 that has previously exceeded the lead action level. We will also be working with Colorado to get more detailed information on Denver Water.

Contact: Sarah Bahrman, Chief of the Drinking Water Unit B, 303-312-6243

Issue: Colorado Nutrient Water Quality Standards Submittal:

Messages:

- The Region received Colorado's nutrient water quality standards submittal in June of 2012. R8 and HQ have completed reviews of the submission.
- The Agency is significantly behind in our mandatory duty to act on the submission (~3.5 years beyond CWA deadline).
- The submission is technically complex and raises important policy issues that have taken significant time to consider.

Background/Status:

- Submission includes chlorophyll a, total phosphorus, and total nitrogen numeric criteria for cold and warm rivers/streams and lakes/reservoirs (among other provisions).
- Region 8 and OW technical and programmatic reviews of the submission are complete.
- Region 8 and OW are preparing an action to formally approve the lakes/reservoirs portion of the submission and take no action on the rivers and streams portion.
- We expect this action will be finalized and communicated to the state in a high level meeting this spring.

Contact: Sandy Spence, Chief of the Water Quality Unit, 303-312-6947

Issue: Potential Impacts to Groundwater from Construction of Gas Wells in Garfield County, Colorado

Messages:

- EPA has been working collaboratively with the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission to evaluate potential groundwater quality impacts in the Mamm Creek Field

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from gas wells lacking adequate cement. This concern was brought to EPA's attention by a local resident. Region 8 recently met again with COGCC to continue our collaboration on this issue.

- COGCC is using the results of our joint evaluation efforts to revisit requirements for construction of new gas wells to better ensure groundwater resources are effectively isolated. COGCC is also prioritizing some existing wells with problems for potential remediation actions.

Background/Status:

- Garfield County has extensive unconventional gas production, with around 15,000 unconventional gas wells.
- EPA first received a citizen complaint about this issue in 2008, and after conducting some initial evaluation, reached out to share our findings with the primary gas well permitting agency, the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission.
- During the following several years, EPA and the COGCC conducted further analysis of construction of gas wells in relation to important groundwater resources.
- Subsequently, the concerned citizen contacted EPA again in 2013 with further concerns. This prompted the Region to conduct an analysis of casing and cement in 348 gas wells. The analysis, which was reviewed by the Office of Water and the Office of Research and Development, identified that 25% of the gas wells lacked cement to isolate the producing formation. Only 9% of gas wells were fully cemented throughout the Wasatch aquifer.
- EPA's analysis was presented to COGCC, and a series of conversations ensued about potential actions to address these concerns. The COGCC has developed proposed revised well construction standards and is preparing to publicly post their evaluation report. They are also considering actions to address concerns with existing wells.

Contact: Ayn Schmit, Water Policy Advisor, EPA Region 8, 303-312-6220

Issue: NPDES Enforcement, DOJ and Utah Entering Into Consent Decree with Salt Lake County to Settle Noncompliance with MS4 Permit.

Messages:

- The Department of Justice lodged a Consent Decree (CD) signed by the EPA, the State of Utah, and Salt Lake County, Utah (the County) on February 2, 2016, to settle alleged Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) violations by the County. After a 30-day state public comment period, the CD was signed by the State January 27, 2016. Once lodged with the federal court, notice for 30-day public comment was published in the Federal Register and a joint press release distributed February 3, 2016.
- Under the CD, the County will take corrective actions to revise and fully implement its Storm Water Management Program required by its state-issued MS4 permit. Included among these corrective actions are requirements to control pollutants from County-owned facilities, industrial and commercial sites, and construction sites within the County's jurisdiction. The County also agrees to locate, investigate and eliminate sources of non-stormwater discharges to the MS4, monitor for impacts to water quality, and ensure that permanent stormwater control structures are properly maintained by their owners. The value of this injunctive relief is estimated to be \$274,770 annually, primarily directed toward personnel resources.

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Included in the settlement is a civil penalty of \$280,000, to be divided equally between the U.S. and the State of Utah.

Background:

- This action is under the EPA's Municipal National Enforcement Initiative where "EPA will take action to reduce raw sewage overflows and storm water discharges from municipal sewer systems that pose a significant threat to water quality and public health." Because the MS4 is an open system, polluted stormwater runoff and sediment can be transported through the MS4 and discharged (untreated) directly into local water bodies. The receiving waters for the County are the Jordan River and the Great Salt Lake.

Contact: Legal: Wendy Silver 303-312-6637; Technical: Mike Boeglin 303-3126250; NPDES Unit Chief: Gwen Campbell 303-3126463

Issue: Colorado Water Plan

Messages:

- The final Colorado Water Plan, released November 19, 2015, incorporates a number of elements, including storage and diversions, to address a projected shortage of water, primarily for municipal needs in the Denver metro area. *The west slope interests are concerned that the plan will lead to more diversions from the west slope, which provides much of the State's water, to east slope agriculture and the Denver metro area.*
- EPA supports the State's efforts to plan for future water supply needs. Notably, the plan includes water conservation as a means to meet part of the demand, and encourages consideration of potential water quality and stream depletion impacts.
- While Federal environmental regulations, such as the Clean Water Act and NEPA, do not interfere with a state's right to allocate water through the state's system of distributing water, water projects that use federal funding and/or need a federal permit will need to describe the anticipated impacts to the environment for the public and decision makers to understand. In addition, project proponents of water supply projects may need to develop and analyze alternatives that will provide the needed water and meet the requirements of any necessary permits.

Background/Status:

- The plan identifies the state's projected water needs and begins to look at ways to address those needs. Colorado's water is distributed through a system of privately owned water rights and is not controlled by the state government. Projects for storing water or diverting it occur through private interests or local governments.
- EPA was not directly involved in developing the State's Plan. However, the plan also has some ideas for streamlining the water project approval process. EPA's Lean coordinator is helping the State Lean coordinator to scope a Lean event with state, federal, and water utility partners to identify ways to streamline the permitting process for water projects. The Lean event is tentatively scheduled for the week of March 7, 2016.

Contact: Phil Strobel, NEPA Program, 303-312-6704; Karen Hamilton, CWA 404 Program 303-312-6236

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Hot Issues – Air

Issue: Billings, Montana SO₂ Nonattainment Area:

Messages:

- Montana's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) submitted a formal redesignation/maintenance state implementation plan (SIP) to Region 8 on December 11, 2015.
- Region 8 has drafted a proposed approval of the redesignation/maintenance SIP to designate the area to attainment status. The proposal should be published in the Federal Register by the end of the month (February 2016).
- EPA's final approval of Montana's redesignation/maintenance SO₂ SIP for Billings and redesignation to attainment will resolve the Sierra Club lawsuit.

Background/Status:

- The state of Montana's SO₂ monitoring data is now showing that the Billings area is meeting the 1-hour SO₂ National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). Governor Bullock questioned EPA at a past National Governors Association meeting about why this area is still a nonattainment area when current monitoring data clearly shows no violations of the SO₂ NAAQS.
- A part of Billings was designated nonattainment for the 1-hour SO₂ NAAQS in August 2013 based on 2009-2011 monitoring data. The nonattainment area is essentially a circle that includes the violating monitor and the 153 MW PPL-Montana Corette coal fired power plant. The Corette power plant was permanently shut down in August 2015. The state's 2012-2014 monitoring data demonstrates the area has attained the standard. This is well in advance of the October 2018 attainment date. Region 8 worked with the Montana DEQ in its development of a redesignation /maintenance SIP for the Billings nonattainment area in 2015.
- EPA was sued by Sierra Club for not issuing to Montana a finding of failure to submit an attainment plan for the Billings 1-hour SO₂ nonattainment area within six months of the April 6, 2015 attainment plan due date. Despite the shutdown of the Corette power plant, Montana is still required by CAA section 191 to submit to EPA an attainment plan (that demonstrates how the area will come into attainment) within 18 months of the nonattainment designation, or by April 6, 2015. Once the nonattainment area is redesignated to attainment, there is no longer a requirement to submit an attainment plan.

Contact: Monica Morales, Chief of the Air Quality Planning Unit, 303-312-6936

Issue: Utah Regional Haze (RH):

Messages:

- EPA must finalize an action on Utah's RH plan by the consent decree deadline of June 1, 2016.
- The comment period on our co-proposed actions closes on March 14, 2016.
- EPA has developed analyses and rationale supporting both a proposed approval and a proposed partial approval and partial disapproval, and we are soliciting additional information or analysis on each proposal to inform our final action. For example, modeled visibility benefits of the BART Alternative compared to EPA's BART FIP.

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- EPA will consider all public comments and information received, including additional options for control technologies and timing, before issuing a final action.

Background/Status:

- The state of Utah is concerned that EPA co-proposed actions on the state's regional haze Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) Alternative state implementation plan (SIP), in which one action proposes a partial disapproval and federal implementation plan (FIP) for more stringent nitrogen oxide (NO_x) controls (selective catalytic reduction-SCR) on four power plant units.
- EPA published a co-proposal in the federal register on January 14, 2016 to: a) fully approve Utah's RH BART Alternative SIP for PacifiCorp's Hunter (NO_x combustion controls on Units 1, 2 and 3), Huntington (NO_x combustion controls Units 1 and 2) and Carbon (shutdown of Units 1 and 2) power plants; and b) partially approve and partially disapprove Utah's plan and under a BART FIP require SCR technology on the Hunter and Huntington BART units (Units 1 and 2).
- Utah's plan assumes that PacifiCorp has spent \$38 million in capital costs to install the current retrofit controls (low NO_x burners and separate overfire air) on the four BART units at Hunter and Huntington. EPA's proposed federal plan would require PacifiCorp to spend an additional \$400 million in capital costs to install the four SCR systems.
- On Tuesday, January 26, 2016, Region 8 held a public hearing in Salt Lake City, Utah for its proposed rulemaking actions on Utah's Regional Haze plan. Bryce Bird, Director of Utah's Air Quality Program, who spoke on behalf of the state, said that EPA should fully approve the Utah RH BART Alternative SIP. Similar comments were given by a representative of PacifiCorp and a significant number of citizens (coal miners, etc.) who worked for the power plants. Region 8 also heard testimony from the Sierra Club, National Park Service, HEAL Utah and other citizens in favor of our proposed FIP for SCR NO_x controls.
- Region 8 heard from both the Carbon County and Emery County Commissioners that EPA needs to visit these counties and see for themselves the great air quality/visibility, especially compared to the PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas in the Salt Lake City metro areas. Following the hearing, Shaun McGrath received a request from Emery County to visit and discuss coal, EGUs, RH, CPP, jobs, economy and environment.

Contact: Monica Morales, Chief of the Air Quality Planning Unit, 303-312-6936

Hot Issues – Oil and Gas Projects

Issue: North Dakota CAA Oil & Gas Enforcement Activities

Messages:

- EPA and North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH) are continuing to work collaboratively with industry to facilitate compliance with the Clean Air Act and reduce harmful emissions from oil and gas operations in the Bakken formation.
- In response to an EPA Compliance Alert and compliance monitoring activities in the Bakken, North Dakota's oil and gas industry formed a Bakken Upstream Air Task Force (Task Force) to evaluate tank system vapor control problems, emissions, and engineering solutions. Along with NDDH, EPA is participating and providing technical assistance to the Task Force.
- EPA and NDDH are continuing to explore a range of actions to help bring companies into compliance. This may include a global settlement approach.

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Background:

- EPA and NDDH conducted joint inspections in 2014-2015 and observed venting from pressure relief devices - meaning emissions were not being routed from tanks to control device - at up to approximately 90% of the wells inspected depending on the operator. Additional inspections conducted by the EPA on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, found similar rates of venting at operations on tribal lands. Possible causes of the VOC emissions venting can be attributed to inadequate system design and/or operations and maintenance problems.
- From December of 2014 through July of 2015, the EPA sent follow-up information requests pursuant to the EPA's authority under section 114 of the CAA, to six North Dakota operators to gather site-specific technical details to assess the adequacy of design of the tank vapor collection systems.
- EPA and NDDH are in active settlement discussions with two of these companies (Slawson and Whiting) and continuing to evaluate responses from four other companies (Enerplus, Marathon, QEP and XTO).
- On December 23, two U.S. Senators, a Congressman and the Governor of North Dakota formally requested a meeting with Administrator McCarthy to discuss ongoing and projected Region 8 oil and gas enforcement activities.
- On January 11, OECA (Cynthia Giles), Region 8 (Shaun McGrath) and NDDH (Dave Glatt) held a conference call with the above mentioned individuals to discuss their concerns.

Contact: Cindy Reynolds, Director, Air and Toxics Technical Enforcement Program, 303-312-6206

Hot Issues - NEPA

Issue: Final EIS for Montanore Mine Project (Montana)

Messages:

- EPA has worked closely with the USFS and MDEQ throughout the NEPA process.
- In recent comments on the Final EIS, we expressed remaining concerns with:
 - data limitations and resulting uncertainty regarding aquatic resource impact predictions, and
 - the adequacy of mitigation for aquatic impacts.
- EPA also recommended the agencies provide a public comment period after the Evaluation Phase of the project, as more data and information become available to inform the impact assessment.
- The MDEQ will be issuing a MPDES permit for the project. Region 8 has been working with MDEQ to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act.

Background/Status:

- Montanore is an underground copper and silver mine proposed underneath the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness area in the Kootenai National Forest in northwest Montana.
- **EPA provided comments on the Final EIS (FEIS) on 1/19/2016** and we have been involved throughout the NEPA process.
- The FEIS is a joint document between the Kootenai National Forest (KNF) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

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- EPA rated the Supplemental DEIS EO-2 (Environmental Objections) on 12/20/2011 based on the projects predicted impacts to aquatic resources.
- We anticipate the DEIS for the Rock Creek mine, adjacent to Montanore and in the Kootenai National Forest, to be published on 2/19/2016.

Contacts: Angelique Diaz 303-312-6344 or Phil Strobel 303-312-6704

Issue: Monument Butte Oil & Gas Development Project Final EIS (Utah)

Messages:

- EPA continues to work cooperatively with BLM to assure that the additional oil and gas development planned in the Uinta Basin can avoid contributing to the existing ozone and related human health problems.
- Numerous ozone NAAQS exceedances have been recorded in the Basin, and the biggest source of ozone precursors in the Basin is oil and gas development.
- The Monument Butte project would increase the number of active wells in the Uinta Basin by 50% over existing conditions.
- EPA and BLM worked together on a proposal to Newfield Energy for how it could reasonably assure that this project is not contributing to existing ozone problems. The proposal would not require BLM to play any role under the Clean Air Act regulating air emissions.

Background:

- Newfield's Monument Butte Oil & Gas Project proposes 5,000+ wells in the Uinta Basin where there are ongoing concerns related to ambient air quality and the potential future designation of an Ozone Nonattainment Area. EPA has been a Cooperating Agency throughout the NEPA analysis.
- EPA rated the Draft EIS as EC-2 (February 2014) with the expectation that if pending air quality modeling showed impacts, then additional enhanced mitigation would be implemented. However, the EIS was substantially changed after the public comment period and the pre-Final EIS does not include those additional air quality protection measures to mitigate identified ozone impacts.
- The Final EIS is on hold pending the outcome of discussions between BLM and Newfield. Newfield attorneys, including a former R8 R.A., have submitted a letter to the Acting Director of BLM's Utah office, copying the Utah Governor, which alleges the following: (1) no need for additional enhanced mitigation, (2) BLM lacks the authority to require such additional mitigation, and (3) EPA is seeking to circumvent the Clean Air Act through NEPA. EPA has informed BLM that the Project has potential "unacceptable ozone impacts" if mitigation issues are not resolved.

Contacts: Phil Strobel 303-312-6704; Amy Platt 303-312-6449; David Fronczak 303-312-6096

Issue: Review of Supplemental Draft EIS (SDIES) for Colorado Roadless Rule, Reinstatement of North Fork Coal Mining Area Exception (Colorado)

Messages:

- EPA's comment letter does not oppose the reinstatement of the North Fork Exception Area.
- EPA routinely recommends that agencies consider climate impacts in their decisions, and also consider opportunities to mitigate GHG emissions.

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- EPA has encouraged the USFS to assure that this Rule allows for a variety of methane mitigation options as these mines expand.

Background:

- Federal rulemakings are subject to NEPA. The USFS issued the *Colorado Roadless Rule Draft Supplemental EIS* on November 20, 2015. **EPA-OFA sent a comment letter to the USFS on February 8, 2016** with an EC-2 (Environmental concerns – Insufficient information) rating.
- This Rule pertains *only* to the North Fork Exception Area in western Colorado. The Rule would allow roads in a designated Roadless Area to support coal exploration and development of vent shafts for underground coal mine expansions. North Fork geology results in coal mines with direct methane emissions at among the highest levels of any mines in the country. The EIS states that approximately 12% - 20% of the estimated net cumulative GHG emissions from mine expansions in the North Fork area would be from methane released and not captured or flared during mining operations.

Related Action: DOI will conduct a more thorough review of climate impacts before any new leasing decisions not subject to Section 6 of Order No. 3338 are made in the North Fork area, and there will be a pause on new leases while that analysis is undertaken.

Contact: Nick Conger, EPA-OECA, 202-564-6287, Conger.Nick@epa.gov